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SUBJECT: GOJ TAKING "WAIT-AND-SEE" APPROACH ON IRENA

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Classified By: EMIN Robert F. Cekuta for Reasons 1.4(b),(d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) officials told econoff the GOJ is still evaluating participation in the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) following the January 26-27 founding conference in Bonn. Officials state the GOJ must address four concerns before it can join, including: (1) the role IRENA will play versus those of similar international initiatives; (2) the scale and effectiveness of the agency's funding; (3) Japan's ability to commit to the organization in the current domestic political climate; and (4) whether IRENA can meet global expectations, particularly for helping developing countries. The GOJ is monitoring closely the USG's position as it considers participating further. END SUMMARY.

WAIT-AND-SEE

12. (C) Ministry of Foreign Affairs Economic Security Division Principal Deputy Director Masayuki Magoshi, a member of Japan's seven-person delegation to the IRENA preparatory conference, told econoff the GOJ is taking a "wait and see" approach to joining the agency. The GOJ does not want to join and lend weight to an agency, Magoshi said, that duplicates work and diverts limited resources. Thus, he continued, the GOJ is concerned about the uncertainty regarding how IRENA will coordinate with similar international initiatives, such as the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership (REEEP), the Global Bioenergy Partnership (GBEP), and the Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century (REN21).

FINANCING AND POLITICAL CONCERNS

13. (C) The GOJ also is concerned about IRENA's funding and staffing requirements. The German government projects a 120 person IRENA secretariat and a USD25 million budget financed on a UN-sliding scale basis. However, Japan questions the adequacy of the budget and the proposed staffing to accomplish the agency's objectives. Magoshi added Japan's budget situation may make finding funding for the agency, if Japan were to join, difficult. The Foreign Ministry would need to coordinate between the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Environment (MOE) and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) to share contribution costs from each agency's respective budget. However, Magoshi said contrary to press reports of strong differences between the MOE and METI over joining IRENA, both agencies are studying the organization's costs and potential benefits.

¶4. (C) Even if Japan were to sign the IRENA statute, Diet ratification, given the current political situation, would be slow, according to Magoshi. However, individual ruling party politicians such as Taro Kono and Yasuhisa Shiozaki are keen to promote renewable energy and have encouraged MOFA to participate in IRENA. Magoshi also named opposition Democratic Party member Kazuhiro Haraguchi as interested in expanding renewable energy.

WHAT COMES NEXT: WATCHING THE U.S.

¶5. (C) Magoshi said Japan will probably attend IRENA's April workshop in Melbourne, especially if the agenda includes further discussion of IRENA's proposed secretariat. He understands the UK will attend the Melbourne meetings and observed many developing countries signed onto IRENA hoping it will facilitate technical and financial cooperation with developed countries. However, only three G8 countries have joined (France, Italy and Germany), and they may have difficulty meeting developing countries' expectations for assistance.

¶6. (C) The German government, according to Magoshi, demarshaled the GOJ urging participation in IRENA prior to the Bonn meeting. The GOJ expects similar pressure in the future. He is very interested in the future direction of U.S. energy and climate policy and what the U.S. may be hearing from Germany.

ZUMWALT